

JOHN RAWN

PROMINENT CITIZEN

BY EMERSON HOUGH

AUTHOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE, 51-10 OR FIGHT.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WATERS

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CHAPTER IV.

At Headquarters.

Halsey and his wife, John Rawn's daughter, had taken up their residence in the small Chicago suburb in which the central plant had been located. Their cottage was a small one, and it was furnished much like other cottages thereabout, occupied by salaried men, mechanics, persons of no great means. It retained something of the complexion of the old quarters in Kelly Row.

Naturally, Halsey was often taken to the central offices in the city for



"I'm Going."

conferences with the president of the company. He frequently met there Virginia Delaware, even at times gave dictation to her—a thing he never failed to remember, but never remembered to mention in his own home. As do many men even in this divorcee age, he set aside comparisons, forced himself into loyalty.

On one such occasion he found himself in the position known among salaried workers as being "called upon the carpet" before "the old man." Rawn held a letter in his hand to which he referred as he chided Halsey for the delays in his department of the work.

"Do you suppose I can stand for this sort of thing coming from New York?" he began. "What's the matter out there with you?"

"There's something I don't understand about it, Mr. Rawn. The men are very sullen. The foremen tell me that they never had so much trouble. Of course, they don't understand it themselves, but it's just as though our secret was getting out, and as if the men were afraid of cutting their own throats when they build these machines. Not that they understand what it's all about—it's all right yet, that's sure."

"You begin to see some of the practical results of your internal socialistic ideas, don't you, then? You'll come to my notion of life after a while."

"Mr. Rawn, what's the end of that? What's the logical conclusion?"

"Well, I'll tell you. One end and logical conclusion is going to be that I'll get some one to handle that factory if you can't; and he'll handle it the way I tell him!"

"You want my resignation now?"

"I'd very likely take it if it weren't for Grace. Besides, we've started on this thing together, and moreover again, I want you, when I go to New York, to see the directors and explain to them that their impatience is all wrong."

"Is there much dissatisfaction down there?"

"Yes. We've both got to run down east to-morrow night. Go on out now, and reserve four compartments on the limited."

"Four?"

"Yes—we'll want a place to eat and work on the road. I've got to take a stenographer along, of course."

"Then you couldn't use the stenographer on the train—I mean the regular one?"

"I could not, Mr. Halsey," said John Rawn. "What business is it of yours?"

"I want you, gentlemen to feel," said John Rawn calmly, "that there's a chance to lay down right here, if your feet are getting cold. Better quit now than later on. I won't work with men who haven't got heart in this thing. If any of you are scared, let me know. I couldn't take over all your stock myself, of course, but if you want to let go, I believe I can swing another company organization."

"They looked at him silently, here and there a gray head shaking in negation. Rawn's eye lighted.

"That's the idea!" said he; "we'll sit tight."

He turned to catch the eye of the late objector. "I'm going," said the latter importantly.

"And good riddance!" said John Rawn calmly.

"I'll take care of you for that, one of these days, Mr. Rawn!"

"Why not now?"

"You'll see what I'll do to you in the market!"

"The market be—!" said John Rawn evenly. "There isn't any market. There isn't anything to buy or sell. If there is any stock offered, I'm the market, right here and now. Go on and do what you can."

Halsey rose and placed on the table the little model which he took from the case at his side. In principle, it was the same which had been shown in the original demonstration at St. Louis, long before, although in workmanship it was in this instance a trifle more finished, showing more of shining brass and steel. Halsey looked about hesitatingly.

"Shall we use the fan again?" he inquired of Mr. Rawn.

"Not on your life!" cut in Ackerman. "No more fan-burning goes. You'll put on the little railway, here on the table, as you were showing me the other day."

"You gentlemen all know the general theory of the invention," Halsey went on, again assuming the post of lecturer, which Rawn once more graciously surrendered to him, waving a hand largely in his direction as though in explanation to the others. "It's simply the attuning of a motor to the free electrical current in the air—the wireless idea, of course. You're posted on all this. Now, I've got some little things here which will show some of the applications of our idea. We'll make a little track, for a railway train, and we'll run its motor here with current of our own, simply by our receiver for the free current."

The thing was there to show for itself. As to the breadth of its application, these men needed no advice. They were accustomed to the look ahead, to the weighing of wide possibilities.

"That's the travel of the future, gentlemen," said John Rawn soberly, at length. "They can take or leave it. So can you."

Silence fell on that group of gray, grave men. The thing seemed to them uncanny, although so simple. They looked about, one at the other. A sort of sigh passed about the room. There sat at the table men who represented untold millions of capital. They were looking upon a device which in the belief of all was about to multiply these millions many-fold.

Rawn was the first to break the silence.

"Gentlemen," said he, "of course this is the big part of our company patents, and it is over this that we've met today. You're being doubtful my executive ability. I have shown you what the prize in that we're working for—there it is on the table. As to the difficulties of pulling off a thing as big as this, they are bigger in this case than could be expected or figured out in advance. Our superintendent, Mr. Halsey here, tells me that he is having a great deal of trouble in labor matters. The men are discontented, and what is worse, they're curious, all the time. We can't employ just any sort of irresponsible labor, and we can't complete one machine—we've got to bring them all through at once, together—and indeed, got pretty near to finish them all ourselves. We can't take any people in on this secret, of course. It all takes time, and it all takes money. What do you want, gentlemen? I can't do much more than I have done."

"And it's enough!" cried the bearded man, his voice harsh, strident with his emotion. "We've got to have it! Let's stick, let's stick, fellows! They'll never shake us off. This is absolutely no limit to this thing."

"Is that still the way you feel, Jim?" asked Standley from his end of the table.

"Yes, it is; how about it, gentlemen?" answered Ackerman's deep voice.

The eyes turned from one to the

other, and round no dissent, although the air of each man was earnest, almost somber.

"Shake hands, then," called out the bearded man with enthusiasm, a man who had swayed millions by the force of his own convictions before that time.

"Let's all shake hands, then, gentlemen," said John Rawn.

They did so, each man reaching out his hands to his neighbor; Halsey, of course, stepping back as not belonging to that charmed circle.

"Move me 'round," said Ackerman. The president dropped the gavel on the table top.

Rawn finally escaping from the crowd of importunate reporters who waited in the halls, at length broke away to go to his rooms. He met Halsey in the lobby. The latter had in his hand a telegram, which shook somewhat as he extended it.

"Well," said Rawn, turning toward him with a frown, "what is it?"

He read: "Charles S. Halsey, The Palatial, New York: Your child is a girl. The mother is doing well. You would best return at once. There is a slight deformity. You must share this grief with the mother when she knows—"

Rawn dropped the message to the floor. Halsey's face looked so desperately old and sad that for one moment Rawn almost forgot his own grief. "You'd better go on home, Charley," he said. "Too bad—to get such news now! But isn't that just like a woman!"

CHAPTER V.

In Proper Person.

John Rawn stood looking at the unceasing throng that surged confusedly through the corridors of the gilded hotel. Warmth, music, a Babel of voices, were all about. There approached a little group of laughing men coming from the carriage entrance, bound, no doubt, to a banquet hall somewhere under the capacious roof. One voice rose above the others as the group advanced. There appeared, rapidly talking and gesticulating as he came, a ruddy-faced, stocky figure, with head close-cropped, jaw undershot, small eyes, fighting terrier make-up.

"I tell you, gentlemen, I'll compromise not in the least on this matter! It makes no difference what they do with the ticket or with me. There's only one way about these matters, and that's the right way! I care nothing whether this man be a rich man or a poor man. The only question is, whether he is right. If he is not right, he will never—I say to you, gentlemen—this with close-shut jaw and fist hard smitten into palm—I say to you, it makes no difference who he is or what he is, he'll never win through; and in the event you suffer from us—"

He passed on, gesticulating, talking. Men commented audibly, for there was no mistaking a man idealized by some, dreaded by others, scorned by some, anathematized by not a few. He was to address that night a meeting of Independent politicians, so called, here in the very house of individualistic power, and many old-line members of his party had their doubts, the fear of a new party being ever present in the politician's mind—the same fear professional politicians, Whigs, Democrats, what-not, had of the new party formed before the Civil War at the command of a people then claiming self-government as their ancient right—as now they begin again to do, facing our third War of Independence.

"Going strong, isn't he?" commented one sardonically, within Rawn's hearing.

"That's all right, my friend," was the smiling answer of yet another. "Strong enough to make a lot of you hunt your holes yet. There's quite a few people in this little old country who side this island—and he'll—"

"Nonsense! No chance, not the least chance in the world!"

"You underestimate this new movement," began the other.

"New movement!—you're 'progressive' eh? Got that bee? A lot of good it'll do you. It will be simply a new line-up following our old and time-tried political methods—it all comes to that, take my word. The people aren't in politics. A lot of professional do our governing for us."

"All the same, there goes the people's candidate!"

"Take him and welcome," was the answer. "Take your candidate. We'll eat him up—he runs."

They also passed on down the hall, gesticulating, their voices swallowed up with others, arising confusedly. This and that couple or group passed by, also talking, among them many persons obviously of notoriety, importance or distinction, though unknown to their observer. Rawn stood and watched them all. The scene was to his liking. The stir, the confusion, appealed to him. The flowering of the great city's night life was here, such as that is. It was the focus of our country's civilization, such as that is. Men worth millions passed, shoulder to shoulder, a wondrous procession, such as that is.

And here and there, always moving and mingling with those men whose reception or whose rejection announced them as persons of importance, moved women, beautiful women, floating by brightly, radiantly, rustlingly—women blazing with jewels, women with bright eyes, women whose apparel bespoke them as accepted integers of the city's vast human sum.

Rawn stood studying the procession for a long time, eyeing group after group carefully. A conclusion was forming in his mind. He was learning that when a man has achieved power,

success, wealth, notoriety even, he turns with his next thought to some woman; and finds some woman waiting.

And then it occurred to John Rawn with sudden and unpleasant force that, although he was among this throng, he was not of it. Himself a man of power, success, yes, even of wealth, he lacked in certain betokening appurtenances thereto. A not unusual wave of self-pity crept slowly over him. Why should he, a man of his attainments, lack in any degree what others had?

He stood pondering, not wholly happy, until presently he felt, rather than saw, a glance bent upon him by a man who passed, a stately and well-garbed young woman upon his arm. He was a man now in faultless evening dress, yet easily to be recognized—none less, indeed, than the dyspeptic director who so summarily had been dismissed by John Rawn himself not three hours ago. His dark face became even darker as he saw the victor of that controversy standing here alone. He smiled sardonically.

To Rawn it seemed that he smiled because he saw the solitary attitude of a man as good as himself, as fit as himself for all the insignia of power, yet publicly self-confessed as lacking all such insignia. He started, flushed, frowned. He had shown these men, these influential magnates in New York, that he could be their master upon occasion—he had mastered this man passing yonder. Yet now he stood here alone, with no woman to advertise his power to the world; and men laughed at him! No woman wore his silks, displayed his jewels. He was John Rawn, born to the purple; yet he might be taken here for a country merchant on his first trip from home.

He turned to the key-counter. The clerk, with infallible instinct—without his request—handed him the key to his room, not lacking acquaintance with men of Mr. Rawn's acquaintance, and knowing money when he saw it.

Rawn passed down the hall, went up two flights in the elevator, turned into the left-hand corridor, and at length knocked deliberately at a door where a light shone.

"Come!" called a soft voice. He knocked again, a trifle hesitant, and looked down the corridor, each way. The voice repeated, "Come!" He pushed open the door.

Virginia Delaware stood before her dressing-glass, her toilet for evening completed except perhaps for a touch about her corsage. She turned now, and flushed as she saw her visitor.

"Mr. Rawn!" she exclaimed; "I thought it was the maid! I had just called her."

Rawn turned and shut the door. "Never mind her," he said. "I will be gone in a minute. I just wanted—"

"You must go!" she exclaimed.

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"We have read your dear little paper for nearly 40 years. Now we don't live on the farm any more, yet I still have a hankering for the old paper. I feel that it belongs to the family, and every year in our deer and hounds as the faces of old friends," says Mrs. E. W. Edwards.

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"We have a brother-in-law who loves a joke. We live in Greater New York, and consider ourselves quite civilized, so when he sent us the Farm Journal as a New Year's gift we nearly died laughing. 'How to raise hogs'—one who only uses bacon in glass jars! 'How to feed cows'—when we are so concerned with milk and eggs for rice pudding! 'How to plant corn'—when we never plant anything more fragrant than hives of the valley. I accepted the gift with thanks, for we are too well-to-do to look a gift horse in the mouth. So if my eye was caught by a beautiful poem, I began to read it, then when I wanted the Farm Journal I found my husband deeply interested in an article. Then my oldest son began to ask, 'Has the Farm Journal come yet?' He is a teacher, and has a rich taste for literature; but we find so much interest and uplift in this little paper that we appreciate our New Year's gift more and more," writes Ella B. Burman.

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